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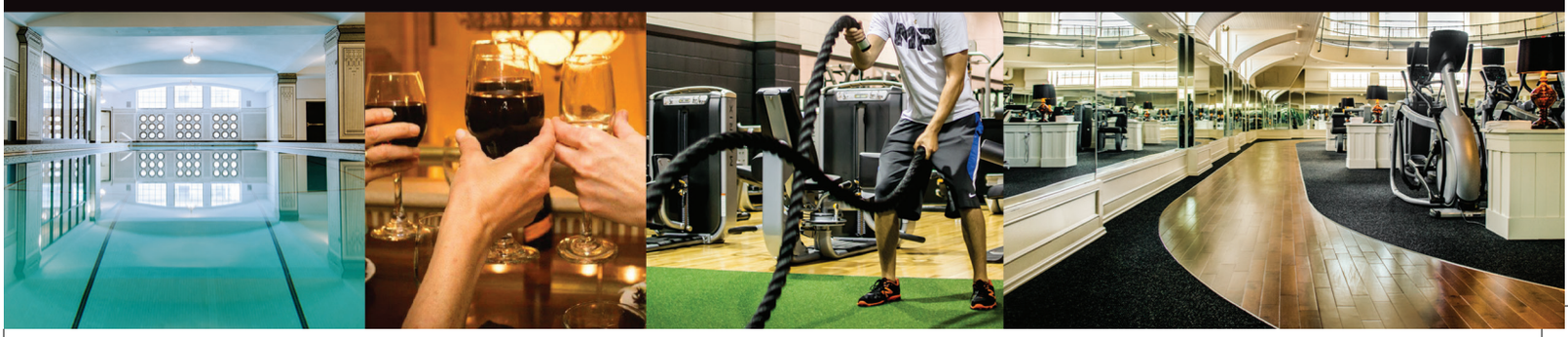
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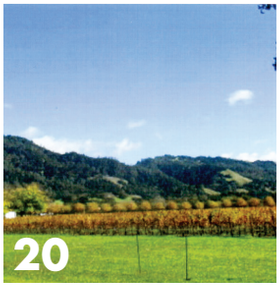
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Photo by Joan Marcus

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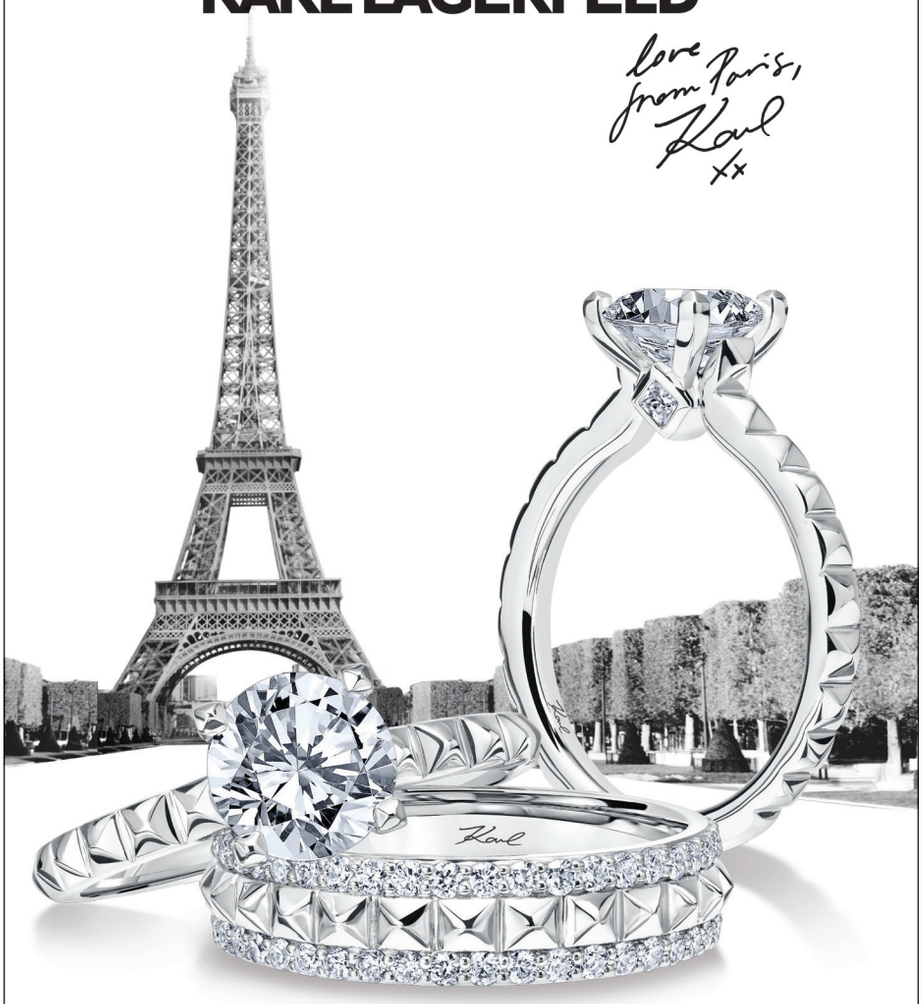
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Managing Editor Andy Lien 612-436-4671
Editorial Assistants Linda Raines 612-436-4694, Kassidy Tarala
Web Editor Shane Lueck
Editor Emeritus Ethan Boatner
Editorial Associate George Holdgrafer
Arts Editor-At-Large John Mark
Contributors Patrick Boland, Kathleen Bradbury, Ellen Krug, Steve Lenius, Shane Lueck, John Mark, Jennifer Parello, Randy Stern, John Townsend, Bradley Traynor, Carla Waldemar

Advertising
Sales & Advertising Director Barry Leavitt 612-436-4690
Senior Account Executive Suzanne Farrell 612-436-4699
Account Executives Robert Felton 612-436-4697, Richard Kranz 612-436-4675, Jory Miller 612-436-4695, Brandon Schewe 612-436-4696
Advertising Associate George Holdgrafer
Sales & Advertising Traffic Coordinator Linda Raines 612-436-4694
Sales Lead Specialist Michelle Ulmer 612-436-4693
Classifieds Suzanne Farrell 612-436-4699
National Sales Representative Rivendell Media 212-242-6863

Creative
Creative Director Hubert Bonnet 612-436-4678
Graphic Designer Mike Hnida 612-436-4679
Photographer Sophia Hantzes
Lavender Studios Hubert Bonnet, Mike Hnida

Administration
Publisher Lavender Media, Inc.
President & CEO Stephen Rocheford 612-436-4665
Vice President & CC Pierre Tardif 612-436-4666
Chief Financial Officer Mary Lauer 612-436-4664
Distribution Manager/Administrative Assistant Molly Gosh 612-436-4660
Founders George Holdgrafer, Stephen Rocheford
Inspiration Steven W. Anderson (1954-1994), Timothy J. Lee (1968-2002), Russell Berg (1957-2005), Kathryn Rocheford (1914-2006), Jonathan Halverson (1974-2010), Adam Houghtaling (1984-2012), Walker Pearce (1946-2013), Tim Campbell (1939-2015)

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612-436-4660 **Office**
612-436-4685 **Fax**
612-436-4660 **Subscriptions/Distribution**
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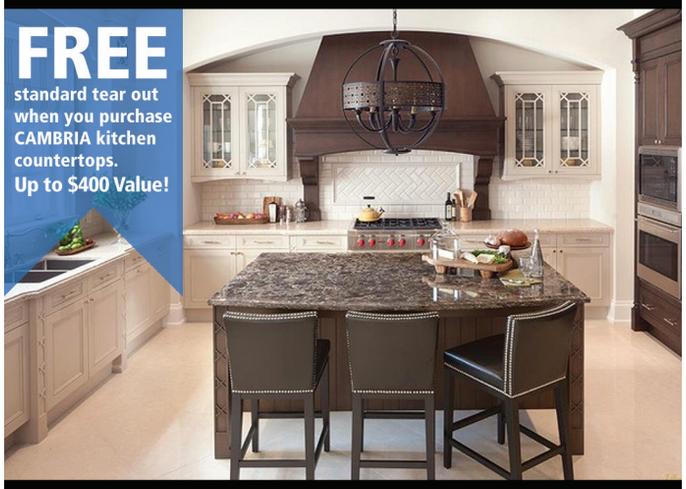
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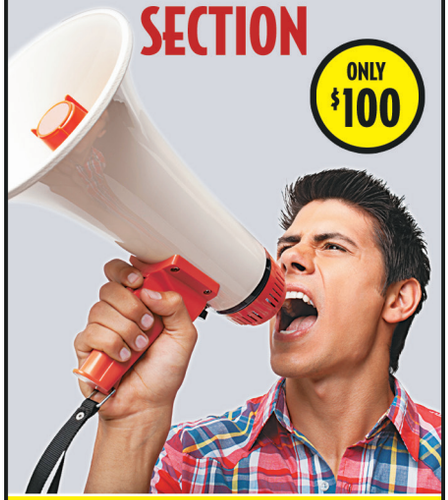
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FROM THE EDITOR | BY ANDY LIEN

Health, Healing and How to Stay Whole

I don't know if you know this, but I've been reading the news for our Big Gay News podcast for a while now, just recently transitioning from twice a week to do it for every episode, five days a week. It's a very interesting exercise, both as a professional and a citizen of our country and world. Linda Raines, my coworker, compiles the stories and I read them into a microphone, sometimes cold, not having seen them before speaking the words. I'm supposed to read the news fairly quickly and without emotion or editorializing with vocal inflection. My job is not to be sassy or judgmental, it is to convey the information. A few times recently, I've been caught off guard by both the beauty and the atrocity of the news that I'm reading. Both swells of pride and absolute shock at how ugly our humanity is can cause me to choke up, gather myself, and re-record the segment. I haven't trained for this; it's pretty much on-the-job training as I go...and as I teach myself. I'm also teaching myself more about the world every day. Through Big Gay News and via so many other sources, I read so much more than I ever have, like I mentioned at the end of 2016. I am overwhelmed by learning as fast as I can and by processing my emotions on the fly at a rapid-fire pace. And this is taking a toll.

In an issue that's all about health — restaurants, dealing with the death of a partner, orthodontics, and HIV/AIDS meds — the topic of mental health and how to cope with the barrage of news and social media is appropriate. I know I'm not alone in wondering how to handle our current events. But I also know that I have been training for times like these, psychologically, and am better prepared to cope with them than I was to take over our podcast, which is clipping along swimmingly. So, let me share some of what I've learned over the years, most of which has to do with dialectics, when two or more ideas are conflicting and we have to figure out how to operate despite their existence. Sound familiar? On so many levels. And, hey, I already paid the copays and premiums for this information. It's all yours to do with what you will.

The first idea I have to remember before stepping foot into coping with the conflicting ideas around me is that there are things I can control and things I can't. This is a foundation for programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous and The Serenity Prayer as well as just a plain old way of fact-checking our worlds. Because, when we make sense of our worlds with a one-two punch of thoughts and feelings, we often need to step back and ask, "But is that true?" and "Can I control that?" before proceeding with processing what's happening. And, we know it's true that we don't have control over a great many things, so focusing on what we do have control over is key for our health.

Reading as much as I do is one way of having control over things. If there is something that has happened and I start reacting to it, I know that the more I can learn about it, the better I will feel, even if I can't do anything about the original situation. My second tip for coping with news is to find reputable sources for the information. I used to look at some of the sources being shared out there, and I'd shake my head that people who don't share my views would fall victim to such shoddy writing and reporting...but then I realized that many of the sources that fall into my own points of view also manipulate me with wonky ways of presenting information. I have found that the closer I stay to reading the sources that mostly report the happenings instead of editorializing on them, the more peace I have in my mind and heart. Because, when the sources go into opinion and clickbait to get people to read, they are often needlessly sensational and more doomsday than fact-checking would support.

It's like talking to two people who have different versions of a car crash and not being able to suss out the actual truth of the matter, so I look to the smashed vehicles to tell me the story. Thankfully, there are sources out there that give us simply the information about the crash, the condition of the cars, the situation before the crash, and other context, even including statements from the two drivers. But, when a source leads with the opinion of a driver or an onlooker, and only sticks to that story, is when we all need to look further to supplement that opinion with the actual facts presented. Lord knows, I love an opinion that matches mine and I wouldn't mind if it were the only side of the story presented. But, we all know that there's more than one side to every story, and the more we can understand about the situation, the better informed we will be. Then, the better informed we are, the more equipped we'll be for coping with the bigger picture.

But what happens when we are overwhelmed with information and opinions and stories and news? The third tip I'll put forth is to reclaim your mindfulness. Mindfulness is being grounded in your present moment, under your current circumstances, thinking and feeling what is happening right now, to you. Not in the future, not in another country, not in the chambers of congress, not in a march. Right now, I am sitting in my green chair and typing this piece. I am putting my thoughts and feelings into my fingers and the keyboard and seeing them appear on the screen. My dog, Grendel, is snoozing on the couch waiting to cuddle, and my coffee is cooling down. I am privileged in my safety and comfort. My apartment is secure, my lap blanket is soft, and my muscles are tense, so I could probably calm down a moment or two. This is my greatest challenge, being mindful. It's hard to slow myself down and just acknowledge that, though I am worried and angry and reading everything I can get into all the tabs open on my screen, I also need to take the dog for a walk soon. Dialectically, my goals for saving the world have to be balanced with living my life. So, how do I do that?

Mindfulness is a broad, broad topic, and I recommend looking up mindfulness techniques. Some things work for some people but don't for others. There are times when imagining I'm a leaf on a river, floating along and being in control of nothing works very well, but there are times when I just need to squeeze my fists as hard as I can to remind myself that I have strength and power, but when I unclench my fists I am also reminded that I also need release and rest, and that it can feel good. I am a big fan of finding — and making time for — self-soothing exercises. What do I like to do that will keep me from coping in unhealthy ways? I like curling up with Grendel and binge-watching shows on Netflix, keeping my screens away from me so I'm not distracted by news. I cook and listen to audiobooks because I can't be preoccupied by news and current events while stories are filling my ears and I'm wielding a sharp knife. Or, something I never knew about until recently but is one of my favorite concepts, I can put the worry aside until later. Because, no, it doesn't serve me to deny the fact that I'm worrying so much lately, but I can tell myself, "You know what? You're working right now. Why don't you worry about this later, after you've written this story?" Some people actually set aside some time in their day to go over their worries. I haven't quite gotten my life structured in such a way

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

A WORD IN EDGEWISE | BY E.B. BOATNER

O Tempora, O Mores...

I write this on the eve of Inauguration eve. Perhaps upon publication, the Commander in Tweet will be seen in a more sanguine light. Perhaps. But even suspending disbelief, normalizing the lying, misogyny, racial bigotry, and homophobia, I see at least two stumbling blocks ahead.

The first concern is the issue of accountability. June 6, 1944: Before committing American troops to Operation Overlord, General Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote and folded into his wallet a note stating, "If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt, it is mine alone." In 66 penciled words, Eisenhower assumed sole responsibility for the possible failure of the entire D-Day invasion, assuring that "The troops, the air and the Navy did all that Bravery and devotion to duty could do."

Imagine this leader's reaction when the merest hint of displeasure from press or citizen unleashes a rash of tweets denying any responsibility of wrongdoing for an event; indeed, denying any fault about anything whatsoever, ever, while singling out a scapegoat.

Traits crucial to a leader were described Thomas Jefferson in an essay about George Washington. In 1814, 15 years after Washington's death, Jefferson wrote, "…His mind was great and powerful, without being of the very first order. […] It was slow in operation, being little aided by invention or imagination, but sure in conclusion. […] Hearing all suggestions, he selected whatever was best; and certainly no General ever planned his battles more judiciously. […] Perhaps the strongest feature in his character was prudence, never acting until every circumstance, every consideration was maturely weighed."

Secondly there is the vexing problem of our incumbent vs. the English language. Jefferson's essay is lucid, lyrical, concise; this president's prose, written or spoken, embraces incoherence. In answer to Bob Woodward's question of what accounted for Abraham Lincoln's success, our new leader responded: "…[Lincoln] was a man of great intelligence, but he was also a man that did something that was a very vital thing to do at that time. Ten years before or 20 years before, what he was doing would never have even been thought possible. So he did something that was a very important thing to do, and especially at that time."

The new order is now a fait accompli. Several (three) of my acquaintances aver that the 45th president will pull up his socks and carry on with bold, new plans of order. Others say he will continue to bluster and posture, spewing forth furious tweets from his gilded lair. If I were a betting man I know where I'd place my money, how about you? ■





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Black Light. Photo by Hatnim Lee

BLACK LIGHT

Feb. 2-12
Penumbra Theatre, 270 N Kent St.
St. Paul
651-224-3180
www.penumbratheatre.org

The alter-ego of Penumbra Theatre Company member Daniel Alexander Jones, known as Jomama Jones, returns to the Twin Cities directly from New York's Under the Radar Festival. Jones' songs composed with longtime collaborator Bobby Halvorson come alive with music by pianist Samora Pinderhughes and vocalists Helga Davis and Trevor Bachman. This show garnered rave reviews on the east coast. Jones was one of the very first Penumbra artists to present overtly queer performance work on the Penumbra stage. Penumbra is the nation's foremost African American theater company.

CORAZON ETERNO (ALWAYS IN MY HEART)

Feb. 3-25
Mixed Blood Theatre, 1501 S 4th St.
Minneapolis
612-338-6131
www.mixedblood.com

The writings of Gabriel Garcia Marquez inspire OBIE award-winning playwright Caridad Svich's epic love story. Her bilingual stage adaptations are familiar to Mixed Blood Theatre, as well as her notions of love, spiritual resilience, and the collision of classes and cultures.

Svich notes, "In dark times, maybe in all times, a reminder of that which sustains and connects us as human beings feels urgent. In writing *Corazon Eterno (Always In My Heart)*, I was thinking about how we need to keep love and light in our hearts and how to remind ourselves that we sometimes need to render our-



Corazon Eterno (Always in My Heart). Photo by Rich Ryan

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

as to schedule in the worry, but I think it can be a great way of handling our world today.

Lastly, we are humans who are operating at a high level of activation lately. That means that many of us are toward the top end of our personal zones of what we can tolerate, in terms of our thoughts and emotions. When we know that we are on edge, easily reactionary and upset, or even likely to go the other way and just shut down, we need to disengage for a little while. When we are activated, triggers can be big and little...but they can send us reeling into a space where we might become even more stressed or fall into despair. So, as a fourth bit of advice, I encourage you to look at yourself and try to sense where your window of tolerance is and try to stay within it. Because when we keep doing what we know isn't doing us any favors by pushing our boundaries, it turns into that we're literally causing our own struggle to continue.

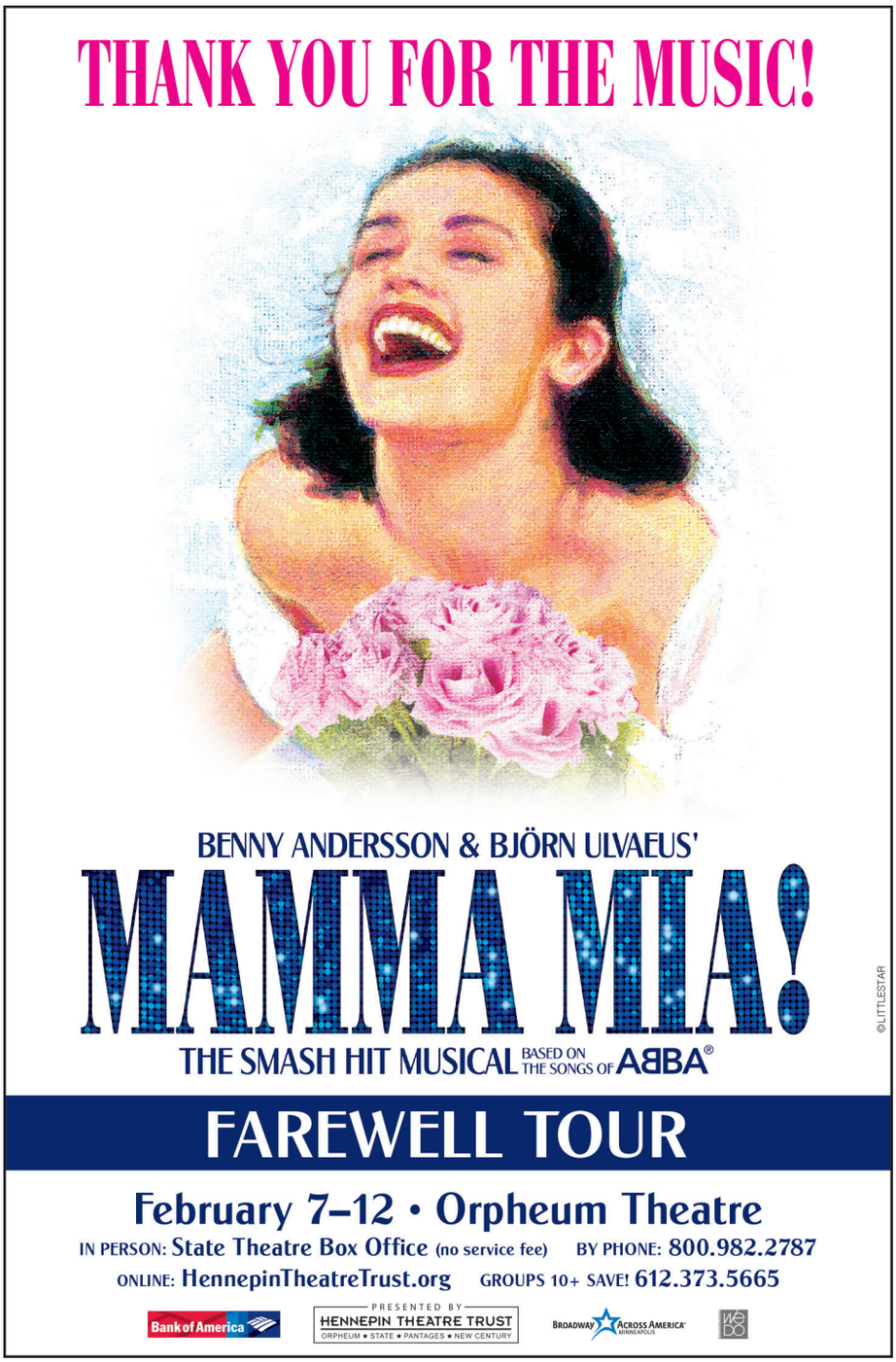
If you find that you are inundated with what your social media is shouting at you, turn it off for a while. If the TV is becoming too much to pay attention to, limit your viewing. If your personal relationships tend to churn through politics a bit too much, change the subject once in a while. And, as much as I'm giving this advice to you, I'm giving it to myself. I need to balance out bad news with good news. I need to find ways I can help. I need to smile more. Sing more. Cuddle more. Those ideas help me, rather than leave me in a perpetually defensive stance. Let me validate you and that our concerns are real, no matter if we're talking about the news of the political world or the news of our private lives; your head and your heart are always trying to make sense of things. And the better prepared you are to take care of yourself as you figure things out, the better your outcome will be.

I won't diminish how things might feel right now to many people. I will say that we have plenty of control over many things, including how we react to what's happening in our world in big and small ways. No army can fight on an empty stomach, but neither can we stand strong if we are mentally exhausted and psychologically beyond our limits.

As another method of mindfulness, I give thanks. I recognize the beauty in this community. The resilience, the courage, the perspectives, the strength, the solidarity, and all the other aspects that have made this community into what it is: a successful force that will not be silenced.

With you, with love, and with thanks,
Andy ■







Grace. Photo by Woodford Sisters Photography



Hedwig And The Angry Inch. Photo by Joan Marcus

selves foolish to become vulnerable to the rites of passage that love demands of us. This play is, in part, a valentine to what we do in the name of seeking another with whom to share a life."

THE DEAD OF WINTER DOUBLE FEATURE – TWO HORROR-THEMED ONE ACT PLAYS

Feb. 9-12
Phoenix Theatre, 2605 Hennepin Ave.
Minneapolis
800-838-3006
www.brownpapertickets.com

Two horror-based one acts are being presented by the World Crime League Theater Company at the Phoenix. Dustin D. Miller's *Days Gone By* is set during a zombie pandemic and the world premiere of *The Surgeon* by Andy Rakerd involves a mystery about the robbery of internal organs, one of those horrible things that is actually going on in the world that most of us would rather pretend is not.

Rakerd, also the co-producer, says, "The World Crime League is a new Minneapolis-based theater company devoted to staging new works with a bit of an edge. We love theater with a dark comedic vibe and a hint of the macabre. More importantly, we want to provide a platform for up-and-coming artists to express themselves and flex their creative muscles. We got together this idea to do *The Dead of Winter Double Feature*, and we're going to be featuring two one-act plays of the horror genre, one of which is a world premiere. Horror is a genre that is not often covered on the stage, so we're hoping to feature new work in that area and to make it an annual endeavor."

GRACE

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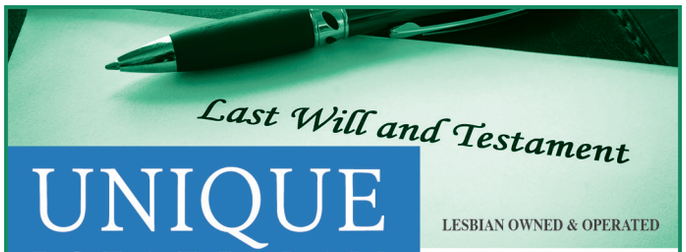
When you hear about the gospel-themed hotels in playwright Craig Wright's *Grace*, you might think, "Aha! Another snarky take on religion along the lines of Trey Parker or Bill Maher. Ho-hum." But when I asked director Terry Hempleman who is staging it at Yellow Tree, he responded, "Craig has a masters of theology seminary in the Twin Cities, so he is a serious thinker about theological issues. The gospel-themed hotels idea is not satirical in the context of the play. There is really nothing satirical in the play at all. Humor — yes! Ridiculously true human behavior — yes! But I wouldn't call it satire. The character who is pursuing the hotels idea is a young man from Minnesota who describes himself and his wife as 'committed Christians.' He wants to do good in the world and to please and honor God. Alas, he is only human, and he will surely struggle the way we all do, with our shortcomings and our hilarious and tragic humanity. The question is: where is god's *Grace* in this mess we make of our lives and our world?"

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH

Feb. 14-19
Ordway Center, 345 Washington St.
St. Paul
651-224-4222
www.ordway.org

The Broadway revival that won four Tony Awards comes to the Ordway. The script by John Cameron Mitchell and music and lyrics by Stephen Trask delve into the alienated world of someone rejected by socially driven norms. Vice President of Programming James Rocco shares, "This entire Ordway season is filled with shows and performances that address the question, 'What does it mean to be an American?' And *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* fits that bill perfectly. Our country is a country of diversity. *Hedwig* is a show about a person

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



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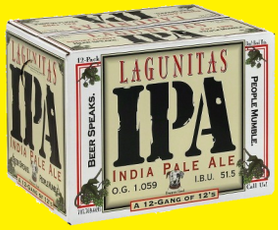
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Pink Unicorn. Photo by Blythe Davis



Radiate. Photo by Daniel Alexander Jones

who is one of a kind — more woman than man, but due to a doctor's accident, she has become her own gender. I've heard people call her genderqueer. As far as I am concerned, she represents the quest for authenticity and the fight to be fully accepted for who she truly is. Isn't that what every American deserves? Inclusion and equality for all. Seeing beauty in the diverse people we all are. It's a landmark musical, and this production brings it to life in full glory." Euan Morton stars.

MAMMA MIA! THE FAREWELL TOUR

Feb. 7-12
Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Ave. Minneapolis
800-982-2787
www.hennepintheatretrust.org

Mamma Mia! is known as "The ABBA Musical" because it was formed by the songs of the Swedish mega-group. If you were around in the 1970s, you know that ABBA ran very counter to the hard rock, acid rock, and heavy metal sound that had been circulating then and in subsequent years. The wholesome quartet was ridiculed as "bubblegum" and inconsequential. But I suspect that could also have been code for being harmonious and melodic when it was more acceptable to be dissonant. Not to mention the envy caused because the group was a financial blockbuster force that surpassed The Beatles.

What's more, even though English was not their primary language, you could understand every word and could relish the vivid images ABBA's vocal phrasing shaped. No wonder their vibrant songs would come to be the structure of one of the most successful musicals in history at a time when fear, gaslighting, and paranoia had become pervasive. ABBA shines like a light in a world where the dimmer switch appears to be turned on too much of the time.

PINK UNICORN

Jan. 27-Feb. 5
Open Eye Figure Theatre, 506 E 24th St. Minneapolis
800-838-3006
www.tctwentypercent.org

20% Theatre Company reprises Elise Forier Edie's play *Pink Unicorn* at Open Eye. Trisha Lee lives in a pink-and-blue world where anyone born with a penis is a boy and anyone born with a vagina is a girl. But that world changes when Trisha's daughter, Jolene, declares herself as genderqueer and wants to be addressed as "Jo." This solo piece features Mykel Pennington and looks into the clash between conservative Christian values in Texas versus not being what society and the education system expect of you.

RADIATE!

Feb. 13-14
Sheldon Theatre of Performing Arts
443 W Third St., Red Wing
651-388-8700
www.sheldontheatre.org

Daniel Alexander Jones is bringing his luminous one-person show *Radiate!* to the Sheldon Theatre in Red Wing. Jones embodies an R&B expatriate diva named Jomama Jones and first played her in Minneapolis in fall of 1995. The rest, as they say, is history. Jones attributes the inspiration to three artists of local performance history: Djola Branner of *Pomo Afro Homos* fame, and the late Rebecca Rice and Kathi Gagnon.

Radiate! is part-concert, part-revival and will be accompanied by a band led by Bobby Halvorson as well as the Sweet Peaches doing backup vocals, Red Wing High School's Ovation Choir, and the Red Wing Singers. The Sheldon's executive director Bonnie Schock points out Jones' powerful music, character acting, and "a poignant, exquisitely delivered story that asks questions that will touch every soul." For those of us who saw *Radiate!* five years ago at Pillsbury House in Minneapolis, I imagine most of us would shout "Amen!" ■

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ARTS & CULTURE | BY SHANE LUECK



Photo by Joan Marcus

STEPPING INTO HEDWIG'S HEELS: EUAN MORTON TAKES ON THE ICONIC ROLE

There are likely two kinds of people in attendance for any given performance of Broadway's touring *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*: those who know what they're getting themselves into and those for whom the smack-talking, genderqueer, wannabe rock star is something of a shock.

Audiences meet Hedwig, born a boy named Hansel in East Berlin, who fell in love with an American G.I. and underwent a botched sex-change operation to marry him and flee to the West. Now, years later, Hedwig is touring the U.S. with her band, the Angry Inch, as she tells her life story, and her tour dates coincide with those of an ex-lover/bandmate who ran away with her songs.

Euan Morton, stepping into Hedwig's heels, says there have been some walkouts by people who "feel threatened" by this piece of theater, but on the whole the audiences have stayed. "The ones that you wouldn't think should stay have loved it, so it's been a really eye-opening experience in a way that I wasn't expecting," he says. "I thought we were going to get to Salt Lake City and play to a house of five people and it was selling really well and the audiences were on fire. I went in with some preconceived ideas about some of these cities and I've been wrong every time."

Whether his audience is made up of "Hedheads" or unsuspecting theater subscribers, Euan Morton couldn't be happier to have them along for the ride. His hope is that *Hedwig*, whose tragic story reflects some of life's most universal truths, will touch them in an unexpected way.

"I KIND OF FEEL A LITTLE LIKE I'M HOME, THIS IS SOMETHING VERY COMFORTABLE FOR ME," HE SAYS. "I ENJOY IT."

"It's the best thing I've done in my career," Morton says. "It's the most freedom I've felt on stage, the most well-rounded character I've played, and the most challenging role I've done. Of course I don't always live up to the challenge, but it makes me do my best and try as hard as I can. It pushes me beyond things I thought I wouldn't be able to do."

That enthusiasm for throwing on some heels and taking the stage as Hedwig could be quite shocking for fans who know Morton was hesitant to take on the show's salacious titular character. Morton says he was repeatedly pushed to do *Hedwig* after receiving a Tony nod for playing the role of Boy George in the androgynous pop singer's autobiographical Broadway show, *Taboo*. But Morton dismissed the idea at first, wanting to avoid being pigeon-holed for roles that involve makeup and heels.

"Now, of course 14 years later, I'm much more aware of who I am," he shares. "And I've realized Hedwig is more than just someone who wears costumes and makeup and wigs and it was unfair of me to treat her like that. She's a well-rounded human being who's as dark and as wonderful as the rest of us and she's an honor to play."

According to Morton, who is Scottish-born but became a U.S. citizen not too long ago, playing Hedwig is especially thrilling now, of all times, in history.

"We're at a time in America's history where I think it's important for people to see people who are different and hear from people who are outside of the norm, whatever the hell the norm is," he says. "Yes, she represents the transgender and genderqueer community, but she also represents young boys who didn't want to be where they are, she represents the gay community, she represents the straight community."

Hedwig is often described as a character that's more than what is seen on the surface, which Morton says is a wonderful thing to take around America right now with a lesson to not judge a book by its cover.

"I think that ultimately it's a story about love: she asks these big questions about love and then goes on a search for the answer," he adds. "She hopes (and I hope) that the audience leaves searching for their own answer having been inspired by her search. I think it's a wonderful time to take a story about love out into this country performed by a person who is ultimately very different than most of the audience."

The unsuspecting audience won't know what to expect from Morton in a show that provides a lot of freedom for the performer, with ad libbing that gives Morton a chance to add his own flair to the character. But at the end of the day, Morton is trying to keep a sense of humanity in the character.

"She's unmistakably human, and that's where I've gone with the character," he says. "That she needs to be liked and she needs to be loathed in the same way that we all do. I also think I play the divide between masculine and feminine a bit more, focus on both equally. There are moments where I'm able to walk across the stage looking like a beautiful lady with my high heels on, but there's other moments where she is very masculine. And it's not just moments of aggression, there's also moments of masculine love, so that she is on the divide all the time."

He is free to bring that sense of humanity and play up various aspects of the character because of who he is *not*. In a role that has been played by the likes of Neil Patrick Harris, Taye Diggs, and Darren Criss, Morton says his lack of fame means people come to the show to see Hedwig, not the celebrity, and he wouldn't have it any other way.

"There's no doubt in my mind that they've come to see Hedwig, because they've certainly not come to see me," he laughs. "It's wonderful for me because it gives me such freedom. I don't have to live up to anything; I don't have to live up to the person I am, there's no *Taboo* stuff, or there's no *Sondheim on Sondheim* stuff, or any of the rest of it. None of it matters. They haven't come to talk about any of that."

Though the audience members come without any expectations of Morton, they're going to walk away having been exposed to a lot of his talent. Morton plays more than just Hedwig, as the nature of the show has Hedwig acting out other characters in the stories she shares with the audience. *Hedwig* is different than most other theater in that there isn't a fourth wall, something that Morton is very used to, having traveled the country with different bands, telling stories and talking with audiences.

"I kind of feel a little like I'm home, this is something very comfortable for me," he says. "I enjoy it; I think it's very rare in the theater you get to play a character doing that, which makes breaking the fourth wall even more exciting because you're in a piece, you're in a performance, you're in a play, and then all of a sudden you're divining information from an audience. I don't think this play would work if you had a bunch of actors playing the other characters and it was a play. The whole fact is you get to see a lot more of this one person in the genre that it's written and the way that it's written."

That one-on-one time with Morton and the audience allows for a lot of learning: about life, love, and yourself, something that hasn't escaped Morton either. Just as he admitted prejudging audiences, Morton says *Hedwig* taught him that everyone is the same.

"If you look at the fundamentals of love and hate and disgust and joy and all the feelings that can be felt by a human being, it doesn't matter if you're gay, or if you're black, or if you're a poor white man in West Virginia," he admits. "Those feelings are ultimately all the same and it's how we represent them in our lives that makes us different and that's what I'm learning now. I wish we could see how similar we all are, because I believe if we all realize that, then we actually could make a difference in the world. We could choose to love each other, rather than hate. And I that's what *Hedwig* is teaching me and I'm hoping that's what she teaches other people."

Still not sure about taking a dip in Hedwig's pool? Morton suggests going to the show anyway. He says, "If you need a night out that will reinvigorate your own beliefs or allow you to see the world from a different side, or forget having a reason, just come and see it. It's not like going to see a million other things that you've heard of; it's a really unique experience and it's something I think people should have." ■

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH
Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
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TRAVEL | BY CARLA WALDEMAR



Photo courtesy of wolfertz/Bigstock.com

Vineyard in Alexander Valley, California.

California, Here I Come

Fifteen years ago, not so much — empty storefronts on a dowdy plaza. Today, the shopping/dining/wine-tasting scene in Healdsburg, California, is hot-hot-hot, and those storefronts hemming their now-magical plaza occupy some of the costliest real estate in Sonoma.

A number of Sonoma's bold-name vintners command tasting rooms right there in the heart of town. Others — many, many others — are just a short drive (or bike ride) away, on estates like that of Ferrari-Carano, launched by an Italian-American family, that rival those of Tuscany. Its similar climate prompted the planting of Mediterranean grape varietals, "and 2016 proved a very good year, with a warm spring and late harvest," discloses Director of Hospitality Patrick Mukaida.

Dry Creek Vineyard, a close neighbor, was the Johnny Appleseed of grapes. No one in Sonoma planted varietals before its visionary founder in 1972. "Now, with vineyards in several different micro-climates, we have even more diversity," explains a tour guide. "But, unlike other wineries, we're deliberately getting smaller, concentrating on quality over quantity."

While on the road, we stop for lunch at Jimtown Store, launched in the 1890s and resuscitated 25 years ago to sate hungry palates with primo sandwiches of spicy pulled pork or grilled cheese gentrified with mushrooms and pesto. Its quirky shopping ops careen from rustic antiques to old-time candies (wax lips, anyone?).

Add DaVero Farm to your must-tour list. Here, as Andrew Hoke explains, "everything Italian" flourishes, including trees for its fabulous olive oil (customers include NYC's Mario Batali and the White House) and primo Primitivo wine. Its 16 acres are certified bio-dynamic, and all its animals have assignments. "The pigs are my tractors to rip up the soil; the sheep are the lawn mowers, and the chickens the security guards" for this Eden of edibles — also, wines "meant to be drunk on any day that ends in Y," chuckles Andrew.

Back in town, consider Oakville Grocery your Mecca for picnic victuals, or tote your lunch (excellent curried chicken salad and mozz-tomato sandwiches) for a spot of people-watching on its terrace. Segue to Noble Folk, conjuring up ice cream and pie in wow! flavors. Or to Costeaux French Bakery's counter of culinary vices amid a display of, oh, maybe 10,000 nutcracker figurines.

Bad meals seem to be illegal in this town. Begin with the guy who put it on the foodie map, Charlie Palmer. At Dry Creek Kitchen, his entrees gambol from pork chop with celery-root puree and chanterelles to spice-crusted duck with Asian pears and duck confit ravioli. Valette, launched by two local brothers, wins points for California dreamin' in the shape of scallops en croute (like a giant pot pie); black cod paired with chili sausage and fennel confit; fennel-crusted Petrali sole partnered with clams, mussels and saffron risotto; and grilled persimmon salad with orange zest and pomegranates.

Meanwhile, Barndiva, housed in a former guess-what, reinvents the BLT with pork belly, tomato marmalade, butter lettuce and bacon crumbles. Then proceed to duck leg confit with polenta and apple marmalade, and my new favorite cocktail: a blend of Buffalo Trace and house Brown Butter whiskey (Jameson, Jim Beam rye and Lapahroig, the three most unlikely glassmates on earth) and apple juice.

Best of the best is Shed, a kitchenware store fronted by a cafe, where

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22





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(From left) **Overlooking the vineyards at Ferrari Cavano Winery outside Healdsburg, California. Viaggio produces fine wines from Italian varietals in Lodi, California. Namesake Shed Salad at Shed Restaurant in Healdsburg, California.** Photos by Carla Waldemar

it was impossible to decide between roasted potatoes with sauerkraut, cheese and dill; chicken liver pate with chanterelles and mustard seeds; charred cauliflower salad with broccoli, pecans and dates; or sunchoke and Meyer lemon pizza embellished with fontina.

To create your own feast, head to Relish Culinary Center, where a hands-on three-course dinner (ours: beet-persimmon-chevre salad; fennel/lemongrass chicken with faro and kale; and olive oil cake) includes wine to sip while stirring and savoring.

Between bites, pop into the Hand Fan Museum, whose unique collection includes rare antiques from Venice to India and China as well as dainty models suitable for Scarlett. Or blaze a trail among the town's 22 galleries, ranging from Healdsburg Center for the Arts' cache of elegant blown glass and jewelry to Hammersmith's conceptual collection, Paul Mahder's artists who meld technique with passion, and high-end Erickson, representing California's bold names.

For info: www.healdslburg.com.

On to Lodi, the Avis of California's wine country. Napa and Sonoma get most of the glory, but — like Avis — Lodi tries harder. (Plus, the 120,000-acre grape-growing region east of San Francisco not only is larger than Napa and Sonoma combined, it also supplies those bold-name destinations with grapes.)

Back in the day, if you said "Where?" well, so did everybody else. Agriculture was the focus of the region, founded in the 1850s during the Gold Rush when those mining pans didn't pan out. Grapes flourished, including during Prohibition, when they were shipped back east with explicit instructions on exactly how *not* to make wine ("First step: Do not…… Next, do not…..").

Today, thanks to the dedication of vintners who took root here, Lodi has grown from an original eight to 85 boutique wineries, specializing in small-lot, handmade, exquisitely drinkable varietals that celebrate their sense of place. Lodi's 35 tasting rooms showcase 75 varietals that flourish here, but the poster grape — the one that has taken the wine-drinking world by storm — is Zinfandel. It's an extremely versatile grape, and the wine it produces can be heavy or light in style. But I love it for its DNA: wild and bristly.

At Michael David Winery, owned by brothers who grew up growing fruits and veggies, David got the bug to make wine, and now produces perhaps the most famous of all Zin labels, 7 Deadly Zins. "We had a record crush this year, the best year for Zins we've seen," he notes. However, his Inkblot, saluting the Tannot grape, "proves Lodi is not homogeneous."

David and Heather, the husband/wife owners of Lucas Winery, met while working at Mondavi, then followed their dream to Lodi, launching its first winery "to demonstrate the appellation's highest potential," says David, who welcomes visitors into his vineyard "to experience the agriculture, not just taste the wine." He introduces us to a vine named Louise (she's next to Cindy and Tina), which produced the elegant 2014 Zin we're tasting: "I'm not after a fruity wine, boring at the table," he explains.

At LangeTwins, a fifth-generation of growers-now-vintners, "We're a participant in the whole ecosystem, not just a monoculture. If you want to be generational, you have to be sustainable, restoring native habitat, monitoring water use."

Jeremy Trettevik worked at Sebastiani before launching Jeremy Wine Co. "Younger guys like me are coming in now, seeing the potential. I work with growers who have the passion to work hard for the little guy, who also believe in what they're doing" — in his case, producing micro-lots of Albarino, Petit Verdot, Tempranillo, Old Vine Zin and more.

At Acquiesce, Sue Tipton, a Chicago girl who "followed a hobby that got out of control," specializes in white Rhone-style varietals because "Lodi's climate is similar to that of the south of France," producing elegant Viognier, Roussanne, Picpoul Blanc and more. St. Jorge Winery's Vern and Jesse Vietta honor their Portuguese heritage not only in their winery's name, but their Portuguese grapes. Their old-world tasting room encourages visitors not only to "buy the wine, but buy the atmosphere."

Bites around town: Towne House, at Wine & Roses Hotel, offers taste treats of CIA-trained chef John Hitchcock, from beet salad with goat cheese panna cotta to pancetta-wrapped rabbit loin, then fig and quince Napoleon. The resort-hotel — the best in town — offers a spa and outdoor pool.

Michael David Winery sports a café whose tortilla soup is tops, as is the green-tomato BLT. Don't leave without pie: apricot, boysenberry, peach, grape, apple. Rosewood offers a pork belly/persimmon salad starter, followed by pork osso buco, salmon with pumpkin hash, or rabbit roulade. The country's original A&W stand, here in Lodi, is saluted by Peter Knight's signature shop, featuring amazing root beer floats and his memorabilia collection.

Stroll downtown: antiques shops, bookstore, art galleries, cookware, and Cheese Central which offers 100 varieties as well as pairing and cooking classes and a walking trail of Walldog murals. Then venture to Cecchetta Olive Oil Farm for tours and tastes of its premier flavored oils from 100-year-old trees.

San Joachim Historical Museum sports 17 acres dotted with historic homes, a one-room school, and a mining campsite. Ag and winemaking tools from past years bring home the region's roots, along with interactive explanations of its fruit-and-nut producing heritage. A neighboring Japanese Garden offers serenity amid lanterns and pond. Sand Hill Crane Watch — mesmerizing, and I'm not even a birdie — attracts cranes flying en masse (2,000 or more nightly) to roost in ankle-deep water. Maps and guided tours.

For info: www.visitlodi.com. ■

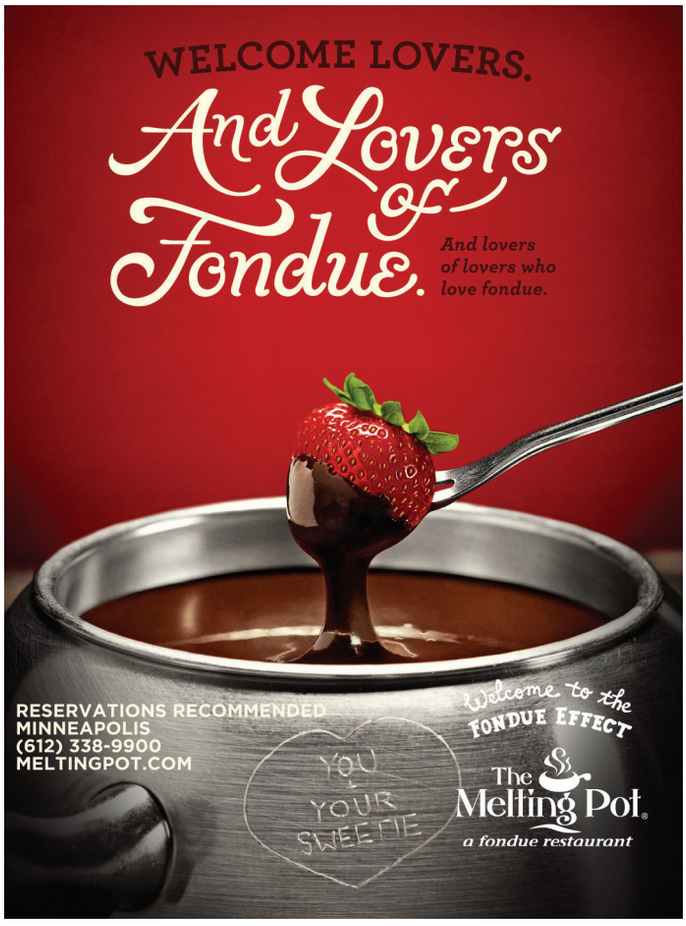




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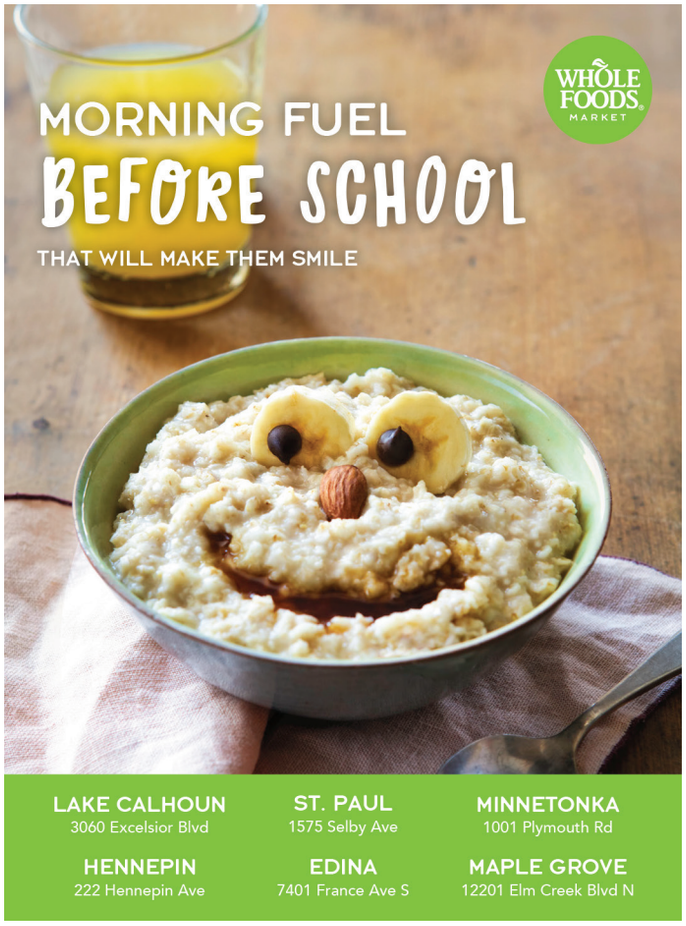
By Bradley Traynor

I maintain a pretty healthy lifestyle. Mostly so I can afford to eat whatever I want, whenever and wherever I go out for dinner. Or breakfast, lunch, brunch, snack, nibbles, etc. The last thing I want to do when I sit down and open a menu is count calories. Or order dressing on the side. Or ever intentionally ask for a side of steamed broccoli. I want nothing to do with portion control and everything to do with, "I appreciate your concern that we ordered too much food, dear server, but we got this." I write a column called "Eat the Menu" not "How to Order the Poached Salmon When You Really Want the Double Bacon Cheeseburger."

I also realize that not everyone approaches dining out this way. Nobody's perfect. Some people do count calories. Others willingly adhere to specific diets like Atkins or Whole 30. Some people just want to have a nice lunch without feeling like they need a three hour nap afterward. I hear you. But really, post-meal naps are pretty awesome, am I right?

Those not looking to inhale every item on a menu can rest assured there are plenty of healthful options for eating out and about around the Twin Cities. And they won't make you feel like you're torturing yourself either. Quite the opposite, in fact. I always do a happy dance when I happen upon a healthy hot spot. They're perfect for those times (typically during the work week) when I would much rather let someone else do the cooking. Or, frankly, I'm just not in the mood for a full-on cheat day binge fest.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



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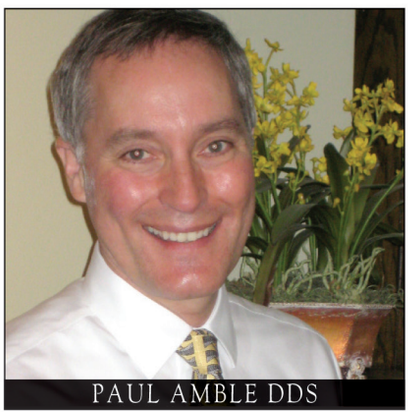
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Sassy Spoon. Photo by Hubert Bonnet

SASSY SPOON

This lovely little neighborhood restaurant in south Minneapolis is equal parts delicious and health-conscious. Especially if you or your dining companion(s) are trying to avoid gluten. Tamara Brown's Sassy Spoon serves up some pretty amazing munchies, including a tasty yucca crust pizza, spicy chicken curry and feta-stuffed, bacon-wrapped dates that will change your religion (to one that worships appetizers — how cool would that be?). Sassy Spoon is also a super takeout option if you're looking to pick up something wholesome for dinner on your way home from work.
5011 S. 34th Ave., Minneapolis
www.sassyspoonmpls.com

SEWARD CO-OP AND SEWARD CO-OP FRIENDSHIP STORE

It's pretty common for co-ops to offer some pretty health-forward prepared food. Seward Co-op and its Friendship store are pretty uncommon, however, in their selection of consistently mouth-watering meals. Each day, Seward serves up a buffet on their signature hot bar that beats any in town. Not a day goes by that I don't check Twitter for their hot bar menu update. The descriptions alone will force you into your car for a quick trip. How does pineapple chicken, cilantro lime rice, roasted yucca with feta vinaigrette, ancho beets and yams, and vegetable mole enchilada sound? See you there!
Seward Co-op: 2823 E. Franklin Ave, Minneapolis
Seward Co-op Friendship Store: 317 E. 38th St., Minneapolis
www.seward.coop

BRASA PREMIUM ROTISSERIE

Whether I'm trying to stay on the Paleo end of the dietary spectrum or if I just need a good old-fashioned protein fix, I can always count on Brasa to serve up some of the best meat around. Slow-roasted, drippingly delicious meat that not only tastes good but also goes great with a hefty selection of side dishes that don't have to break the calorie budget. How about some slow-roasted pork with collard greens or beans and rice? Just make it a double-order, I'll be right over.
600 E. Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis
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www.brasa.us

BIRCHWOOD CAFE

The best health food is really just real food made with love. Birchwood has been infusing love into their wonderfully down-to-earth real food for years. Ever since my first visit (on a date, no less), I've relished the cozy comfort of Birchwood's thoughtful, seasonally appropriate menu. From house-made pickled vegetables to grass-fed steaks, there's something suitable for a casual lunch or rarified date night dinner. Don't forget weekend brunch, either. I hear the savory waffle is just beyond.
3311 E. 25th St., Minneapolis
www.birchwoodcafe.com

How's that for a healthy start? You've now got four solid options for dining out without all the guilt. At least about the food, that is. While I hope you'll give yourself permission to splurge on occasion and throw dietary caution to the wind when necessary, having a few trusty healthful options in your back pocket isn't a bad idea. Especially when they're as delicious as the ones I've recommended. Who wants to stop by Sassy Spoon on their way home and pick me up a couple of those yucca crust pizzas? Pretty please? ■



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UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH THE DEATH OF A PARTNER

By Tony Del Percio

It does not matter if you're straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender: we are all human beings who have the capability to love and be loved. From the moment we are born, we develop bonds and attachments to people, places, and even things. When that bond is separated and detached, especially because of death, we experience grief and loss.

Grief is an intense emotional and psychological suffering related to any type of loss we may experience. Depending on the bond and the relationship, grief can last a few days or several months. Yet for those who have experienced a significant death, grief can last up to two years. Grief does not just involve the emotional but also the physical. The feelings we experience are neither right nor wrong; they just are.

It can be difficult for us in the GLBT community when a partner/spouse dies or even when we go through a serious break up after being together for a long period. Still in our society there are those who will never accept same-sex relationships or marriage or the fact that two people of the same sex can love just as much as a heterosexual couple. I can remember running a support group for men in San Diego whose partners had died, and some of these men had been in long-term relationships and yet had no legal rights over their partners at the time of death. The family of one of the deceased came and took the body and never recognized the



Photo courtesy of Brilliance Eye/Bigstock.com

two of them as a couple. The surviving partner never had a chance to say goodbye because in many states the next of kin has the legal rights. That is why it is so very important that couples in the GLBT community have the legal papers that will honor the wishes of the couple before a serious illness or death, because you may not have any rights. Luckily, our society is changing and becoming more open, accepting, and acknowledging of same-sex relationships. Love is love.

It also may be difficult for a partner to talk about their loss with family, friends, and coworkers if they are not out. The lack of support leaves those to grieve in what feels like solitary confinement, which could lead to a greater isolation and a deeper depression.

When dealing with a death or a serious break up, we will experience a wide range of emotions and physical reactions. We may experience shock, denial, depression, anger, guilt, abandonment, insomnia, lack of energy, memory problems, confusion, concentration difficulties, forgetfulness, social withdrawal, chest pains, panic attacks, and headaches as well as other symptoms. These are normal reactions. For some, the emotional pain may become so intense that they will find ways to mask their feelings with increased alcohol or drug use or by taking various unhealthy risks because they may feel they have nothing else to live for. Men, in particular, have a difficult time doing their grief work because of what they have been taught over the years: "be strong," "it's finished so move on," "men don't cry," or "pull yourself up by the bootstraps." Over the years, the lack of understanding feelings, expressing them, and dealing with various losses such as coming to terms with sexuality, divorce, abuse, poor self-esteem as well as other losses has led to substance abuse, abusive relationships and suicide. Men must learn to find healthy ways to express feelings and not be embarrassed about them. Some members of the GLBT community may not have the love and support they need in coping and adjusting to death.

For many, the funeral is the easy part. It is the weeks and months after it when reality sets in and we become more aware of the void in our lives. We know in our heads that our loved ones have died, yet our hearts do not want to believe or accept it. As you begin the mourning process, you need to understand that not only are you experiencing grief, but you are also going through a period of stress and adjustment as you begin to make changes in your life now as a single person.

It is important as you begin the mourning process to be open and honest about what has happened and to accept the fact that your loved one has died. Once you can accept and move from your head to your heart, you can begin to heal. As you move through the process, you will feel like you're on an out-of-control roller coaster ride, especially around birthdays, holidays, and anniversaries. For many, the sixth month

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33

What is TRUVADA for PrEP (Pre-exposure Prophylaxis)?

TRUVADA is a prescription medicine that can be used for PrEP to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection when used together with safer sex practices. This use is only for adults who are at high risk of getting HIV-1 through sex. This includes HIV-negative men who have sex with men and who are at high risk of getting infected with HIV-1 through sex, and male-female sex partners when one partner has HIV-1 infection and the other does not.

Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to prevent getting HIV-1. Always practice safer sex and use condoms to lower the chance of sexual contact with body fluids. Never reuse or share needles or other items that have body fluids on them.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA for PrEP?

Before taking TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- **You must be HIV-negative.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1 infection. Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-negative.
- **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** If you have flu-like symptoms, you could have recently become infected with HIV-1. Tell your healthcare provider if you had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting TRUVADA for PrEP or at any time while taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- **You must continue using safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- **You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.**
- **To further help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1:**
  - Know your HIV-1 status and the HIV-1 status of your partners.
  - Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months or when your healthcare provider tells you.
  - Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV-1 to infect you.
  - Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior.
  - Have fewer sex partners.
  - Do not miss any doses of TRUVADA. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
  - If you think you were exposed to HIV-1, tell your healthcare provider right away.
- **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1**. TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects:

- **Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis)**, which is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms of lactic acidosis include weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, nausea, vomiting, stomach-area pain, cold or blue hands and feet, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or fast or abnormal heartbeats.
- **Serious liver problems.** Your liver may become large and tender, and you may develop fat in your liver. Symptoms of liver problems include your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, and/or stomach-area pain.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or serious liver problems** if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking TRUVADA for a long time. In some cases, these serious conditions have led to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any symptoms of these conditions.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** If you also have HBV and take TRUVADA, your hepatitis may become worse if you stop taking TRUVADA. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider. If your healthcare provider tells you to stop taking TRUVADA, they will need to watch you closely for several months to monitor your health. TRUVADA is not approved for the treatment of HBV.

Who should not take TRUVADA for PrEP?

Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP if you already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status. If you are HIV-1 positive, you need to take other medicines with TRUVADA to treat HIV-1. TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP if you also take lamivudine (Epivir-HBV) or adefovir (HEPSERA).



What are the other possible side effects of TRUVADA for PrEP?

Serious side effects of TRUVADA may also include:

- **Kidney problems, including kidney failure**. Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your kidneys before and during treatment with TRUVADA for PrEP. If you develop kidney problems, your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking TRUVADA for PrEP.
- **Bone problems**, including bone pain or bones getting soft or thin, may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.
- **Changes in body fat**, which can happen in people taking TRUVADA or medicines like TRUVADA.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP are stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA for PrEP?

- **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis virus infection.
- **If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant**. It is not known if TRUVADA can harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant while taking TRUVADA for PrEP, talk to your healthcare provider to decide if you should keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.
  Pregnancy Registry: A pregnancy registry collects information about your health and the health of your baby. There is a pregnancy registry for women who take medicines to prevent HIV-1 during pregnancy. For more information about the registry and how it works, talk to your healthcare provider.
- **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. The medicines in TRUVADA can pass to your baby in breast milk. If you become HIV-1 positive, HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.
- **All the medicines you take**, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. TRUVADA may interact with other medicines. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.
- **If you take certain other medicines** with TRUVADA for PrEP, your healthcare provider may need to check you more often or change your dose. These medicines include ledipasvir with sofosbuvir (HARVONI).

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.FDA.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Important Facts about TRUVADA for PrEP including important warnings on the following page.



Have you heard about

TRUVADA for PrEP™?

The **once-daily prescription medicine** that can help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 when used **with safer sex practices**.

- TRUVADA for PrEP is only for **adults who are at high risk of getting HIV through sex**.
- You **must be HIV-negative** before you start taking TRUVADA.

Ask your doctor about your risk of getting HIV-1 infection and if TRUVADA for PrEP may be right for you.

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IMPORTANT FACTS

This is only a brief summary of important information about taking TRUVADA for PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. This does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your medicine.

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Before starting TRUVADA for PrEP to help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- **You must be HIV-1 negative.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1 infection. Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-1 negative.
- **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include flu-like symptoms, tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin. Tell your healthcare provider if you have had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting TRUVADA for PrEP.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP to help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- **You must continue using safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- **You must stay HIV-1 negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.**
- **Tell your healthcare provider if you have a flu-like illness while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.**
- If you think you were exposed to HIV-1, tell your healthcare provider right away.
- **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1.** If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.
- **See the "How to Further Reduce Your Risk" section for more information.**

TRUVADA may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Buildup of lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis)**, which is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, nausea, vomiting, stomach-area pain, cold or blue hands and feet, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or fast or abnormal heartbeats.
- **Severe liver problems**, which in some cases can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, and/or stomach-area pain.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection**. If you have HBV and take TRUVADA, your hepatitis may become worse if you stop taking TRUVADA. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking TRUVADA for a long time.

ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP (PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS)

TRUVADA is a prescription medicine used with safer sex practices for PrEP to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection in adults at high risk:

- HIV-1 negative men who have sex with men and who are at high risk of getting infected with HIV-1 through sex.
- Male-female sex partners when one partner has HIV-1 infection and the other does not.

To help determine your risk, talk openly with your doctor about your sexual health.

Do NOT take TRUVADA for PrEP if you:

- **Already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status.**
- Take lamivudine (Epivir-HBV) or adefovir (HEPSERA).

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF TRUVADA FOR PrEP

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the "Most Important Information About TRUVADA for PrEP" section.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Bone problems.
- Changes in body fat.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP include stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight.

These are not all the possible side effects of TRUVADA. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

Your healthcare provider will need to do tests to monitor your health before and during treatment with TRUVADA for PrEP.

BEFORE TAKING TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- Have any other medical conditions.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you become HIV-1 positive because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

- Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with TRUVADA for PrEP.

HOW TO TAKE TRUVADA FOR PrEP

- **Take 1 tablet once a day, every day**, not just when you think you have been exposed to HIV-1.
- Do not miss any doses. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- You **must** practice safer sex by using condoms and you **must** stay HIV-1 negative.

HOW TO FURTHER REDUCE YOUR RISK

- Know your HIV-1 status and the HIV-1 status of your partners.
- Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months or when your healthcare provider tells you.
- Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV-1 to infect you.
- Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior.
- Have fewer sex partners.
- Do not share needles or personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more, including how to prevent HIV-1 infection.
- Go to start.truvada.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit start.truvada.com for program information.

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Photo courtesy of Antonio Guillem/Bigstock.com

often becomes more difficult as reality really sets in. We will experience triggers of sights, smells, sounds — especially music — that will turn a good moment to a bad moment in a second. Depending on the type of death, there may be more heightened feelings such as anger and guilt. It is okay to be angry since we may feel cheated or that we did not have enough time with our loved ones. Guilt is where we say, "If only…" "could have…" "should have…" It is more important that we come to an understanding of our guilt, whether it be real or imaginary. In sudden deaths, there may be unfinished business in the relationship or intense guilt that we may need to get past to truly accept reality. We all do the best we can with what we know at the time.

At some point, it is Important to begin letting go to heal and find a new purpose. Our grief is not about the person dying as it is more about the loss of the relationship: someone to hold, someone to talk and share each day with, someone to cuddle and hold hands with. You will grieve the loss of dreams and a future with your love. You might also experience the loss of identity, especially if you were in a long-term relationship. In other words, "who am I?" becomes very unclear. It is crucial that we not rush or deny our grief. For some of us, we may find that older unresolved losses from our past come to the forefront.

The following are some helpful hints for dealing with loss: recognize it, you are not alone, give yourself time to heal, keep decision-making to a minimum, beware of being on the rebound, don't rush into a new relationship, set goals, keep a journal, drink plenty of water and eat well. And know that you will survive.

As you grieve, it is important if you have children to allow them to be open and honest about their feelings and take time to share stories and memories. If the kids are younger, put together a memory box with personal items and photos. Depending on the age of a child, be as open and honest about the death, yet do not overwhelm him or her. Plus, never tell a child something that may need to be undone later. In other words, never lie to a child about the cause of death. Allow the child to participate fully in the funeral, no matter what age he or she may be.

As you grieve the death of your loved one, it may be important to find a support group of others who are experiencing the same things. This may be a difficult task since many of the groups out there are mostly made up of older individuals who have been married for many years. These people may have trouble understanding a same-sex relationship and may not be respectful of your mourning. Otherwise, you might find that you are comfortable sharing your grievances with close friends and family.

If you are reading this and know someone who has experienced the death of a partner/spouse, here are a few tips on how you can help that person cope and adjust: give them your physical presence, just be there. Do rather than ask. Most people who are grieving do not like to ask for help. Keep the subject on them, this is not a time about you. Do not rush the person through their grief or try to find them a new relationship. Never minimize a person's loss. Be with them for the long haul because for some this may be a long process.

I will be hosting a free, informal grief seminar for the GLBT community on Wednesday, March 8 at 7 p.m. at our Bradshaw Funeral Home location at 3131 Minnehaha Avenue South in Minneapolis. If enough people are interested in a support group, we will continue with a regular group. If you have any questions, you can contact me, Tony, at 651-489-1349. ■

Tony Del Percio is the full-time grief counselor for Bradshaw Funeral Homes in the Twin Cities. He has 32 years of experience helping families cope and adjust to the death of loved ones.

DO YOU THINK YOU'RE TOO OLD FOR ORTHODONTICS? THINK AGAIN

By Dr. Jesse Veil

Do you think orthodontics are only for children or teens? Think again! Now, more than ever, adults are seeking orthodontic treatment for a variety of reasons. Some people want to improve their smiles or correct their bites, other people are seeking to improve their health or to boost their self-esteem. Today, well over a million Americans over the age of 18 wear braces, according to the Academy of General Dentistry.

Every day adults are getting braces or Invisalign, even celebrities. Country music singer Faith Hill wore braces to the Grammy Awards in 2013, when she was 45 years old. And when he was 40 years old, Tom Cruise wore ceramic brackets to improve his teeth. In our suburban offices, about 25 percent of our patients are adults. But in our downtown Minneapolis skyway location, 100 percent of our patients are adults, which means you won't have to worry about being the only adult in our office getting work done on your teeth. Another unique feature of our downtown Minneapolis office is that it is an Invisalign-only adult practice, which was only the third of its kind in the nation, the other two being in Miami and Detroit. So maybe you've been thinking about getting braces, but you haven't yet made the decision to improve your smile. Don't put it off! Here are five great reasons why adults should get braces. Keep reading, and find out if braces are right for you as an adult.

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1. Adults should get orthodontics because every smile is important.

Your smile is one of the first things people notice. When you smile, you can have a positive impact on the people around you. But if you're afraid to grin or you try to cover your teeth when you smile, you won't have the same effect. Maybe you've always had crooked teeth, but you weren't able to get orthodontics when you were younger. Or maybe they've just recently started to get crooked. Maybe you have serious jaw pain or are having trouble cleaning your teeth properly.

Many people say their crooked or unattractive teeth are holding them back from living life to the fullest. Your oral health can impact your ability to get a job and can have a direct impact on your social life. Why not explore orthodontics and fix your mouth now, especially since the advent of Invisalign and the lesser need to wear braces? The results will amaze you, and you'll no longer feel self-conscious about your teeth in the future. And, with Invisalign and the state-of-the-art Element ITero scanner, we can literally show you your end results before you even get started, by using a simulator.

2. Adults should consider orthodontics because teeth can move at any age, even if they are healthy.

Teeth can shift at any age. Maybe due to an injury, a health condition, or simply natural growth. Perhaps you had straight teeth in the past, but are now facing a crooked and overcrowded smile. Even if you had braces in the past, you may need them again. Why? Some people have mouths that change naturally. Other people neglect to wear their retainers as much as they should. Orthodontists now tell people to wear retainers much longer than they recommended in previous decades. Some people even need to wear one for life.

3. Adults should get orthodontics because today, orthodontic options are better, cheaper, and less noticeable.

Braces have evolved over the years. Today, wearing braces is less painful and requires less time. Almost all our adult braces patients are happy they made the commitment to correct their teeth. No longer do you need to suffer the embarrassment of being a metal mouth. The brackets used today are smaller and bands that wrap around the tooth are no longer used. Ceramic braces are popular with adults due to their cosmetic appeal because they are made of a translucent (clear) material. Another great advancement for teeth that is popular with adults is Invisalign. We are a Top 1% Provider of Invisalign, one of only three in the state of Minnesota. These clear, removable, plastic aligners are worn over the teeth and use no metal or wires. When you are custom-fitted for Invisalign, you'll have no food restrictions, and you'll be able to brush

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36



Photo courtesy of Michael Jung/Bigstock.com

and floss like you normally would. And as an orthodontic specialist, we are able to get clear, consistent results using Invisalign and/or braces as this is all we do.

Maybe your parents couldn't afford braces when you were growing up, but now you can. Many medical and dental insurance plans cover part of the cost. Or maybe you make enough money to save and pay for orthodontics out of pocket. Our orthodontic office offers many financing options to accommodate your needs, and we would be happy to go over these with you. We can also review your insurance policy and help you maximize your benefit and file your claims.

4. Adults should get orthodontics to avoid serious problems with their teeth and mouth.

Research has shown that the frequency of misalignment in adults is comparable to the frequency in children and teens. When you have a crossbite or misaligned teeth, you have an increased chance of plaque and food buildup between your teeth. This means you may get periodontal disease or gum disease. You can also possibly avoid tooth decay, gum and bone loss, irregular wear of the tooth enamel, and TMJ/TMD pain (or chronic facial discomfort). Also, if you're thinking about getting dental implants, the rest of your teeth will need to be straight first, so you'll want to get orthodontics before you can consider that treatment option.

5. Adults should consider orthodontics because people are living longer.

People are living longer, and many people are keeping their teeth for life, so it makes sense to pay the price to straighten crooked or crowded teeth. Even older adults are getting braces. According to the American Association of Orthodontists, more and more people who are in their 60s, 70s, and 80s are using braces.

Are you ready to smile a lot more? What's holding you back from getting braces as an adult? If you have difficulty biting, chewing, or speaking, or you have teeth that are crowded or protruding, why haven't you decided to explore orthodontics yet? Are you concerned about the pain? Improvements in technology make the process of getting braces much more gentle and pain is no longer an issue. Adults often do a better job caring for their orthodontic appliances and following the advice of their orthodontist, which means their results can be more impressive than those of a child or teen. ■

If you are ready to take steps to improve your smile, Veil Orthodontics would love to help you, no referral required. Contact Veil Orthodontics today to set up your free consultation and see what braces option is right for you as an adult. It's never too late to have a smile you love! Call 952-903-9484 or go to www.veilorthodontics.com.

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MEDS4LIFE

BECAUSE GIVING BACK IS STILL THE BEST MEDICINE

By Amy Moser



Photo by Abraham Saraya

Over 30 years ago, The Aliveness Project was born over potlucks and kitchen table conversations about AIDS, stigma, and survival. Refusing to be isolated from each other and loved ones, the HIV community intentionally created a physical space where anyone with HIV could access social support, food, and therapies that just might provide relief from the side effects of those early medications. Today The Aliveness Project stands strong as a thriving member-based community center in Minneapolis providing supportive services like case management, medical nutrition therapy, food shelf, and hot meals to people living with HIV, in addition to community-building and other activities to decrease isolation. As was true in the beginning, anyone living with HIV is eligible to apply for membership at no cost. In 2016, over 200 new faces entered our doors.

Today, thanks to the advancements in medications, we are seeing many people living with HIV successfully going on antivirals and maintaining an undetectable status. Many people are working and have strong social and familial networks. Many are living healthy, self-directed lives. But as



Photo by Abraham Saraya

was true in the early days, this is not always the case. In 2016, The Aliveness Project provided assistance to nearly 2,000 individuals living with HIV. That's nearly one-quarter of Minnesota's epidemic. Over 95 percent of those who use our services live on little-to-no income. Housing instability and food scarcity are real issues. Stigma still tears apart families and creates isolation. Mental health and chemical health challenges undercut regular access to health care. The HIV community, much like any community, is a mix of those with and without. The Aliveness Project is here for everyone.

I regularly have conversations with people living with HIV who are unsure of how they can engage with The Aliveness Project. "I don't need to use a food shelf, so I am not a member." Or "I come for a meal now and then to see

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40



Photo by Abraham Saraya

my friends, but I always feel like I am taking from someone else who needs my spot."

But for The Aliveness Project to be a healthy and viable organization, we need the entire HIV community at the table — now more than ever — as members, volunteers, and donors. One way to participate and support Aliveness is Meds4Life.

If you happen the be one of the fortunate people with qualifying health insurance and are taking your HIV medications, there is a way for you to give back and help, at no cost, with minimal effort.

Meds4Life is a program that allows you to give back to The Aliveness Project by purchasing your medications using qualifying insurance at participating pharmacies. Anyone living with HIV in Minnesota who is taking HIV medications and has qualifying insurance is eligible to participate. You simply contact us to qualify, enroll, and select your pharmacy. It's that easy!

I think my favorite aspect of the Med4Life program is for every prescription that is refilled, a percentage goes to help someone who needs the help. It's that easy! I would say, selfishly, my second favorite feature is the ease of the process. My scripts were transferred over seamlessly, the monthly distribution was set up, and it's automatic and delivered by mail! No more schlepping to the pharmacy, waiting in line, having an issue, etc. The people at the pharmacy were so personable and helpful it actually made me mad that, for years, I had tortured myself refilling the "normal" way! Another great added benefit, which I do so appreciate, is the nutritional counseling Aliveness offers me as a program supporter. I can have a consultation in person or by phone whenever I want, and discuss some tips and tricks for balanced nutrition which help me live a healthier life with HIV. So, now I simply get to "live and let live."

—Dennis, Meds4Life Supporter.

Meds4Life supporters are eligible for nutrition and wellness services like nutrition assessment and body composition analysis, coaching and goal-setting, and even food journal review and recipe analysis. They also get invitations to exclusive Meds4Life supporter events.

Simply by participating, Meds4Life supporters donate up to 40 percent of the cost of each HIV prescription to a constellation of supportive services and programs, positively impacting the wellbeing of Minnesota's HIV community. By participating, you create additional resources for others who need it — as a member and a donor — a vital role in our HIV community. ■

To learn more or enroll, please contact Arissa Anderson, Nutrition & Wellness Programs Director at Arissa@aliveness.org or 612-822-7946, ext. 217.

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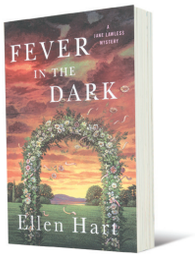




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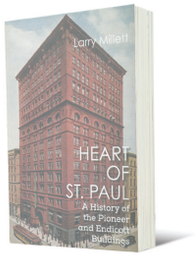
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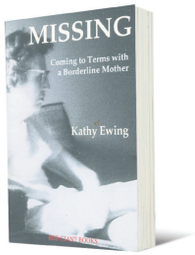
Imagine you are part of a same-sex couple and you have come home from your first anniversary vacation to find that your proposal video has been stolen and posted on YouTube, poised to go viral. Mixed notices pour in, and while one, Fiona, is enjoying the attention, her wife, Annie, turns out to have secrets that bring violence — and murder — to their doorstep. Suddenly they are both suspects. Fiona brings in her old friend, detective Jane Lawless, but Jane's findings are far from reassuring, and she herself begins to question what the chilling evidence will prove their involvement to have been. As always, Hart, a Mystery Writers of America 2017 Grand Master winner, ratchets up the tension to the reader's (near) breaking point. Hurry out and pick this one up!

Heart of St. Paul: A History of the Pioneer and Endicott Buildings
Larry Millett
UMN Press
$39.95



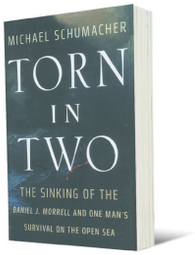
In 1889, as Paris welcomed the newly opened Tour Eiffel, the Minnesotan Pioneer Press Company sent invitations to one and all for an "informal reception…on the occasion of the opening of The New Pioneer Press Building," one of the subjects of this splendidly written and illustrated volume. The oversize dimensions of the pages perfectly frame the black-and-white photos, plans and drawings, and fresh color illustrations that surround Larry Millet's text, a detailed history of the two iconic buildings, located in, as the title states, the heart of St Paul. Enfolding the Pioneer Building were (and still are) the embracing arms of the Endicott Building. Interwoven with the stone and steel are human biographies and memoirs of the lives that teemed within. An engrossing read.

Missing: Coming to Terms with a Borderline Mother
Kathy Ewing
Red Giant Books
$14.95



If you didn't grow up with a Borderline mom, you'll find Ewing's narrative hard to believe; if you did, it will be painfully accurate. The word "missing" is the key. Someone you love — or want to love — just isn't there, yet is all too painfully a family presence. Ewing inserts just enough scientific and professional information on Borderline Personality Disorder to ground the reader and to give him or her a firm footing on which to stand and observe, while avoiding making *Missing* what she terms a "jargon-laden tome." The already-chaotic family dynamic was deeply affected by her father's illness and paraplegia. Ewing's long journey, which she is still traveling, is told vibrantly and intimately, and can help others directly or indirectly affected by BPD.

Torn in Two: The Sinking of the Daniel J. Morrell and One Man's Survival on the Open Sea
Michael Schumacher
UMN Press
$25.95



Great Lakes historian Schumacher (*Mighty Fitz*, 2012; *November's Fury*, 2014) relates in chilling prose the last voyage of the 600-foot freighter *Daniel J. Morrell*. In one of the notorious storms that bedevil the Great Lakes in late November, the ship was literally torn asunder and sank beneath Huron's turbulent waters with 25 crewmen. Watchman Dennis Hale had initially missed the ship and boarded at the next stop, now found himself on a raft with three other survivors. Clothed only in his peacoat, life jacket, and boxer shorts, Hale clung to the raft for 38 hours as the others perished. Rescued, Hale survived one ordeal only to face others as Coast Guard hearings and the discovery of the Morrell's wreckage after 12 years weighed heavily upon him. ■

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RIDE REVIEW | BY RANDY STERN | PHOTOS BY RANDY STERN

2017 Mitsubishi Lancer









Last year, we said good-bye to an iconic sports compact.

It was the one car that engaged a whole generation of enthusiasts with its brute turbocharged power and tremendous traction from its all-wheel-drive system. Our drive in it exhibited all of the traits that brought these enthusiasts to this high-performance sedan.

The Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution may be gone, but its legacy lives on.

The good news is that the Lancer still exists. You might not get high horsepower and all of the performance goodies of an Evo. What you do get is one of the most proven sedans in the class. While other compacts try hard to woo you into sharp lines, loads of technology and ultra-efficient drivelines, the Mitsubishi Lancer gives you a straightforward, no-nonsense car with superb value.

No-nonsense? Yes, but the 2017 Lancer lineup is far from no-nonsense. In fact, for a car that has been sold in its current basic form since the 2008 model year, it offers a lot more than most of its rivals in its class. A facelift for 2016 helped give the Lancer a new life without the Evo and Ralliart models to cast a shadow on the rest of the lineup.

As long as we covered Mitsubishi, we never got a chance to drive a "regular ol' Lancer." We finally got one: a 2017 SEL 2.4 AWC model. The first we'll tell you is that this is not just any "regular ol' Lancer."

The SEL is the Lancer's top-of-the-line model. It is also the top of the line among cars in the Mitsubishi lineup. Last year's updates truly make this model special: the new nose along with a few nips and tucks all around. Prominent on the SEL are 18-inch two-tone alloy wheels with low-profile tires.

The rest of the Lancer should be familiar. Though Toyota Corolla, Honda Civic, Ford Focus, and Chevrolet Cruze owners prefer their more modern, edgy, and stylish exteriors, the Lancer is the only one that kept it real. It is a solid formula with a conservative roofline and a short deck. The new front clip helps the Lancer's cause by keeping it modern, including the LED driving lamps surrounding the fog lights on the lower part of the bumper.

Step inside and things might not have changed since 2008. There have been a few upgrades since. The audio interface is an upgrade to meet with the rest of the lineup. A few buttons and switches here and there. But, mostly, this is the same tested and true instrument panel we have seen since the 2008 model year — and it works. Two big dials with a TFT information screen in the middle keep the driver in check, while there are steering wheel switches and appropriate stalks for better control of essential systems. In all, every switch is logical and solid to the touch including the climate control, knobs, and AWC switch for a change in traction.

Front seating offers support in the cushion and seat back, with leather upholstery denoting the SEL model. These manually adjusted seats were heated, which worked well through some winter weather conditions that the Lancer was subjected to. Rear seat room was quite good, even for people up to six-foot-one. Headroom and legroom are indeed a surprise for a compact

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sedan. Trunk space starts off with 12.3 cubic feet of space, but is expandable with fold-down rear seats into the cabin for longer items.

Infotainment starts with a touch screen system offering Bluetooth and USB connectivity for your phone. It also has 24 presets for SiriusXM broadcasts. Nine Rockford Fosgate speakers, including a trunk-mounted subwoofer, emitted 710 watts of sound throughout the cabin. The one thing I wished this Lancer had is a satellite navigation system. It is not available on even the top model of this lineup.

There are two engines for the Lancer. A 148-horsepower 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine is available for the value-packed ES 2.0 version. That model comes with a five-speed manual transmission and front-wheel drive. An available Continuously Variable Transmission can be added to the ES 2.0; however, our SEL 2.4 AWC tester had the upgraded 168-horsepower 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine, the CVT transmission, and All-Wheel Control as standard.

The latter point is important because only a few cars in its class offer all-wheel drive. Only the Subaru Impreza, WRX, Volkswagen Golf Alltrack, SportWagen and R offer the added traction of all four wheels being driven, aside from the Mitsubishi Lancer. In this car, there is a switch that can also lock both front and rear axles for maximum traction through even the worst conditions.

With the exception of some slick patches of ice, the Lancer's AWC system did quite well. This was accomplished even with all-season Dunlop tires. Winter tires would make this package even more superb. What stood out on the Lancer, however, was underneath its hood. The 2.4-liter engine was more than willing to go even with a light touch of the accelerator. Even with 3,149 pounds to cart around, the 2.4-liter engine seems to be a better performance choice for the Lancer. It felt happier in the Lancer than in the other Mitsubishi models this engine equips. Perhaps this was a reminder from Mitsubishi to forget about the Evo and Ralliart models that once topped this sedan's lineup.

As for driving dynamics, it is not quite up to the hardcore level of the gone-but-not-forgotten Evo/Ralliart. Ride quality was very compliant and smooth, though, that meant some roll and lean at times and an earlier cornering limit than expected. There is plenty of control, especially with the AWC system switched to the 4WD Auto setting. Steering is well-weighted and very precise. In fact, the Lancer SEL uses a good ol' hydraulic steering system — and that is a welcomed sensation a lot of us have forgotten. The brakes have an excellent feel and feedback. It exhibited solid stops in normal, panic, and winter situations.

The one thing you will not find on the Lancer is a host of active safety features found on some of its competitors. This is an important point as there had been plenty of pushback by consumers regarding the use of life-saving features, such as forward collision warning, blind spot monitoring, and lane departure warning. Mitsubishi offers a good suite of these features on their Outlander SUV, therefore the technology is proven within the brand. The Lancer is plenty safe and solid, starting with the AWC drive system.

The Lancer lineup is priced from $17,795 for the ES 2.0 with front-wheel drive and the five-speed manual transmission. Our fully optioned SEL 2.4 AWC tester came with a sticker price of $24,430.

While the Evo and Ralliart are no longer offered, that fact should not prevent customers from considering the 2017 Mitsubishi Lancer altogether. In essence, this car is quite good for what it offers when compared to others in this segment. Only a few would want a big turbocharger and hardcore driving dynamics. The rest of us want to simply commute, shop, go out and enjoy life.

There is some news to pass along. While the remaining models of the Mitsubishi Lancer are still for sale, it will disappear altogether by the end of this year. Production for the Lancer will finish up in August in Japan.

While we still have this wonderful car, let's just say that the Mitsubishi Lancer is the right choice for the rest of us. If you are not one to care about active safety technology or being on the advanced automotive curve but want a good, solid automobile with all-wheel drive, then this is your car. ■





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DATELAND | BY JENNIFER PARELLO

Ghost Story

I was driving home from work when it happened.

I remember looking at the sky just before the phone began rattling malevolently in the car cup holder where it had been resting as silent as a cadaver. The sky was a dull, gray tarpaulin that offered no expression. It was a sky that seemed tired and ready to give up on the world.

When the phone suddenly started bleating, I looked down from the heavens to the device. My heart seized for a moment, as it usually does when the phone keens for my attention. I've tried changing the ringtone to cheery mambo music to lessen the anxiety brought on by it, but it's only resulted in making me very suspicious of all things Cuban.

Anyone who cares about me knows that I hate speaking on the phone, and friends only call me when absolutely necessary. I haven't liked it since I was a child. I'm not very insightful, so I've never cared to investigate the cause. I'm sure it has something to do with my mother because, frankly, what doesn't?

Oddly, my mother was the only person I enjoyed speaking with on the phone. She was a virtuoso who transformed phone communication into an art form. She would do most of the heavy lifting, always prepared to amuse the listener with stories and gossip. And she would respond to your end of the conservation with a heightened level of outrage, delight, and curiosity, which diminished the creepy sensation of carrying on a discussion with a disembodied voice.

But my mother died four years ago, so the call that day wasn't from her.

Without looking at the device, I knew that the call wasn't from my spouse either. She hates talking on the phone as much as I do. We were together a year before we ever spoke on the phone, and we do it as little as possible now. We are never at a loss for words when we are in each other's physical presence but, on the phone, our connection becomes as diaphanous as a cobweb.

I quickly glanced at the phone and was relieved that the caller was not someone in my address book. So it was not bad news from a friend or family member.

It also did not seem to be a call from a marketing firm. Neither the area code nor the aggressiveness of the phone tremors — like a tea kettle on full boil — suggested anything as banal as a robocall.

Even though I didn't recognize the number, I knew who was trying to reach me. I pulled to the side of the road and backed away from the ringing phone as if it was a knife.

It's alarming how your peace and happiness can be so easily disturbed by a specter from the past. Armed with smart technology and the determination to chill your soul, they can emerge from the dark shadows of your personal history and invade you simply by appearing as a series of brightly lit numbers on your phone's LED screen.

I stared at the phone as the mambo music ringtone looped incessantly. I had blocked numbers in the past. That never worked for long. I considered changing my number but didn't want to demonstrate weakness in response to aggression.

The mambo finally ended and the phone settled into silence.

I pulled back into traffic and drove home. There, I found my spouse in the kitchen making a stew. The kids were in the living room, bickering over control of a game player. The dogs were ridiculously happy to see me.

The spell was broken. The haunting was over. I was home. ■

AT-LARGE | BY JOHN MARK

The Other Tyler Perry

"I'll give you $10 if you hold this sign for me," Tyler Perry said to a homeless man who was panhandling on the street corner. The homeless man took a look at the sign. It read, "9/11 was an inside job – Follow @tylerjohnperry."

"I might have to do that," the homeless man responded.

This conversation is from the first episode of an internet-based reality television series titled *Verified* in which my friend, Tyler Perry (not the Tyler Perry who plays Madea, I'm talking about the shorter, more suburban, less successful one), documents his journey to becoming internet famous. In this episode, he employed the homeless to advertise his Twitter handle, hence the name of the show. He vows to not stop until he becomes verified on Twitter; the only concrete way for one to confirm that he or she is "officially" famous in the ever-increasingly online world.



Photo by Aleutian Calabay.

In other episodes, he holds a car wash, goes door-to-door, buys urinal ads, donates a bunch of ad-filled notebooks to Goodwill, and even hires models to stand on the street corner and wave around signs with his Twitter handle on them. He asked me to be a part of it. Being immediately fascinated with the idea, I gladly accepted. Our idea was to hold a focus group full of people who didn't know him and ask them to watch and give feedback. Responses were mixed: people said his chances were low (someone even said he had a 0 percent chance) but they also said that, at the end of the day, they were still rooting for him. In the episode, I told him that I think the idea of someone trying to get famous for the sake of being famous could work; I just questioned whether or not *he* was the one to do it. He's got great ideas, he's willing to commit fully, but he simply might not have the personality for it.

When I watch the show, I find myself wondering, "Why is he doing this?" Sure, he's trying to get famous. But why is he *really* doing this, deep down? What's the underlying motivation? Is he insecure about how much success he's had (or hasn't had) in his career? Does he feel as though fame will extinguish his feelings of inadequacy? Does he want to see how far he can take the joke? Or does he truly believe that this idea — becoming famous for being the guy who tried to become famous — is a golden comedic idea? Will becoming famous open up doors for him, allowing him to pursue other goals within the industry?

It's likely a combination of a few. One of the most interesting parts of the concept is that, if he keeps it up, these stunts will become increasingly desperate. Therein lies the entertainment. Perry is clearly unafraid to humiliate himself in the process. Either his publicity stunt ideas work or they don't. But if they don't, it'll be funny to watch him crash and burn, which might be more interesting than if he were successful. Talking about him at all, whether positively or negatively, feeds into his agenda in a way. I'm doing it right now!

In the entertainment industry, fame is usually a clear-cut way to determine success. If you are famous, then you are successful. Maybe he just wants to be successful, and fame is the way to feel that success. I don't know why he's doing it, and I don't know if it'll work, but I'm undoubtedly rooting for him. If you happen to have a Twitter account, go ahead and follow @tylerjohnperry. Whether you're delighted or offended, it's sure to get a rise. ■

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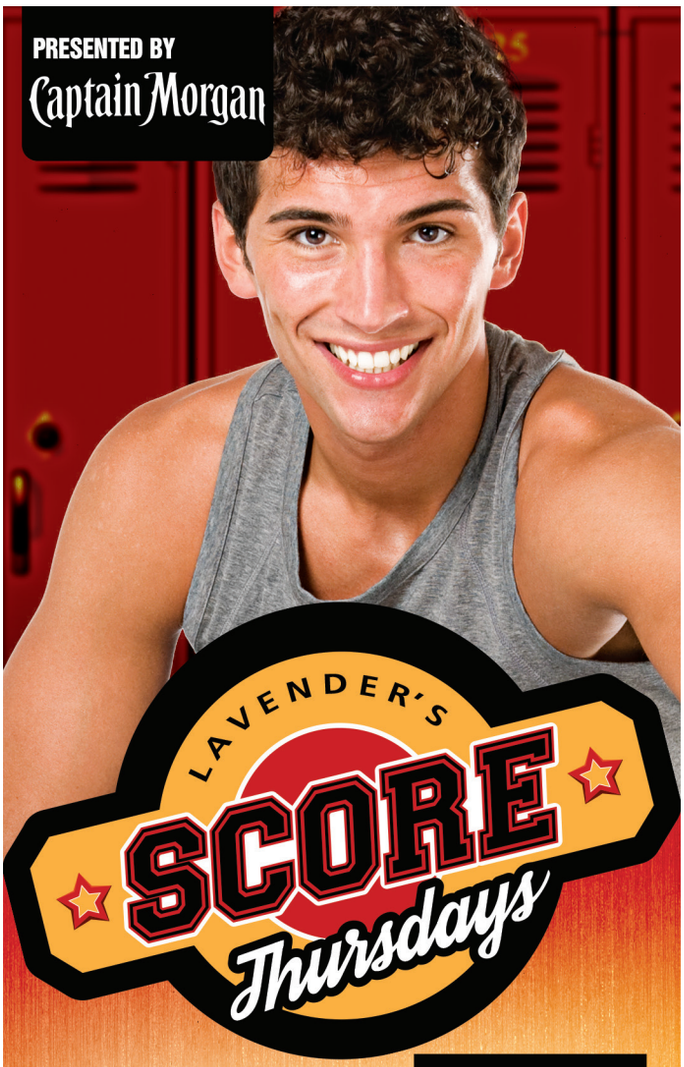
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